

佐島勤

Tsutomu Sato

illustration 石田可奈
Kana Ishida

魔法科高校の 少等生

The irregular
at magic high school

とりこ
龍神の虜

司波兄妹が二学年となった二〇九六年。

その年の『九校戦』も、

陰謀渦巻く事件が巻き起こった。

これは、そんな「裏」の物語ではなく、
本来描かれるはずの「表」の物語——。



Short story – Ryuujin no Toriko.

In 2096, the Shiba siblings became second years. In that year's 9SC, a conspiracy swirled also occurred. This is, not a story of such 'secret', originally, this was a story that should be 'presented' on the table.

2nd of July in 2096, a ground-shaking news arrived to the First High School Student Council. It was the announcement of changes in 9SC, 'The National Magic High School Magic Competition'. It specified high-risk games to the players, which carried a strong military flavour, as the magicians were affected by the recent Yokohama Incident. However, it was a behind-the-scene conspiracy to develop a new magic weapon. Tatsuya who had been given the information via unidentified email that a forbidden humanoid weapon, 'Parasite Doll', which used parasites, was going to be tested in 9SC, at the stage of 'Steeple Chase Cross Country'.

The test plan was dangerous and inhumane, especially with making the Magic High School students to be the guinea-pig in the 'Steeple Chase Cross Country' for the sake of the new weapon. Tatsuya who was participating in the 9SC as a technical staff of First High, took action in order to prevent this.

In that interlaced of conspiracies, the 'Steeple Chase Cross Country' was carried out at the Fuji Base, while Tatsuya

confronted the 16 Parasite Dolls. He defeated all of them, regardless of the wounds suffered on his body.

Nevertheless, in August 2096, that was not the only battle which was waged in the foot of Mt. Fuji. On the front side of those plots, were the Magic High School students who aimed the crown of victory of 9SC, exciting game unfolded with the use of magic, this year too. Moreover, Here, I want to introduce one of the records of the battle among the Magic High School students.

13th of August in 2096. The 9th night of the 9SC, at First High's dinner venue, the sense of urgency which had lingered up to the previous day was replaced with a high spirited atmosphere.

“Mitsui-san, congratulation on your victory”

“Satomi-san, too, congratulation on getting the runner up”

“You girls managed to snatch the top 2 places. An exact reproduction of last year's freshmen game!”

Honoka and Subaru were surrounded by the girls from 3rd year who were congratulating them.

“Nakajou-san, thanks for your hard work. As expected, you did a stunning adjustment which takes advantage of Satomi's speciality”

“Thank you, Isori-kun. In the end, I'm still loss to Shiba-kun though”

“It’s alright, isn’t it? Since we’re in the same team. Beside, his case is a little different” Azusa was encouraged by Isori with flowers.

“Shiba, good job”

“As usual, what a stunning adjustment” Beside Hattori who congratulated Tatsuya with a somewhat stiff attitude, was Kiriha who greeted Tatsuya with a laughter (probably, due to his friend’s attitude). Their table was not the only one who was talking about today’s game, most of the other tables were, too. This slightly hilarious atmosphere was not unreasonable with regards of the background.

Up to the 4th day, First High only seated at 2nd place with 390 points. There was a difference of 60 points to the first place, which belonged to Third High. Yesterday, Third High stood at 580 points, while First High was still behind at 575 points.

And today, the end of the 9th day of the tournament, First High had successfully turned the table, Third High gathered 600 points, while First High had 655 points. They finally stood on the top after trailing behind the much worshiped Third High since the 2nd day of the tournament.

Before the previous generation, ‘the strongest generation’ graduated, First High had never expected to struggle. The current generation suffered a much uphill battle. It might be natural that it came to tight position.

“Hattori, it’s still too early to be relieved. We still have another competition tomorrow”

A third year, Minakami Carey, spoke from Hattori’s behind. Tatsuya who sat next to Hattori, gave him the seat while carrying a tray, Carey said ‘thanks’ before taking the seat.

“Yoshida-kun, take a seat”

Next to Carey, opposite to Hattori, Sawaki took a seat, appreciating the freshman who participated in the freshmen competition. Mikihiko was called by Carey, he decided to calmly follow Carey’s request (order).

“If we’re defeated, the girls’ effort in reversing the situation would be wasted”

“I know. I intend to win tomorrow’s competition just as today’s. Then, the overall victory will go to First High by our hand”

If they win tomorrow’s Monolith Code, the overall gap to the Third High which hold the 2nd place would be 95 points. By this year’s rule, this amount could easily be overthrown depending on the Steeple Chase Cross Country’s result, but it still contribute to overall win.

There were overall 10 rounds for Monolith Code were done in half for each group, meeting up at their 5th round, both First High and Third High had 4 wins and 0 losses. They couldn’t afford to lose one round. They were evenly matched.

“Ah. Finally, tomorrow we will directly confront Third High and win over no matter what”

In response of Hattori’s strong words, Carey also declared victory. Then, he looked aside toward Mikihiko.

“Yoshida, I’ll be counting on you like today”

“Ganbarimasu”

However, Mikihiko replied firmly despite being asked so suddenly without stammering. He reflected the enthusiasm for victory on his face, as his other 2 senpais.

Pouring in Psions to CAD. In the central part of CAD was the Eidos of sensitive stone which converted Psion signals in correspond to the electrical signal which passed through the body. This way, the actuate outputs were sent to the magic calculation area from the body.

“..Yeah, it’s alright. It’s a stunning adjustment as always, Tatsuya”

“That’s my job after all.”

Tatsuya answered Mikihiko’s praise dismissively.

Mikihiko also knew that Tatsuya’s attitude was not just an act. He took pride in his work, without being uselessly proud of his work. This was one of the feats he had. Tatsuya’s adjustment focused more on the construction of the system of the fundamental magic in the CAD, not just one of the technique.

“Actually, it would have been much better if I can use the same interface and auxiliary tools that Mikihiko always uses. Please bear with the somewhat different usability”

“No, this is enough. I’m considered lucky compared to other schools’ students which have to use much inferior CAD than what they’re used to”

This wasn’t a put up front. It was the auxiliary tools which he began to use since last winter. The tools who were summarized as a form of metal charms, extended from the main part to be connected to his forearm, a Psion wave oscillator, made from sensitive alloy with engraved magic. It was a hybrid of charms and CAD to aid magical procedure per say.

The magic actuation via traditional charms started with assembly of command in accordance of the symbol drawn in the charms equal magic sequence for spirits, which cause the spirits to project the magic via the charms.

On the other hand, this auxiliary tool fed the start-up magic sequence to the oscillator, which was pre-complemented with engraved pattern of the charm, and took the Psion wave through the skin via the oscillator from magic calculation area. It built a semi-automatic command to the spirit, from there onward, the processes were the same as the charms projection. This magic was almost in no way inferior in speed and by using this CAD, he was able to use magic from the charms he was familiar with.

Unfortunately, 9SC regulation banned Psion signal from charms. There was an idea to use a card-type single-activation specialized CAD, but it was against the regulation to use such a thin-shaped CAD. After exhausting other alternatives, in the end, he could only rewritten and adjust the system to be programmed in commercially available CAD.

Tatsuya was not satisfied with this result. However, Mikihiko seemed to feel that it was enough. Last year, he was also using a device that was hurriedly adjusted by Tatsuya in the pinch hitter of last year freshmen game, but he understood about the unpleasantness since it was a make shift after all. Last year, he was concerned if he could use the engineer-adjusted aid at ease, but it was different for this year. He was able to activate magic without stress, a lot more fluid.

“I would be punished if I still complain after all these. From this point onwards, it’s the players’ responsibilities, not the engineer anymore, it’s time for me to work hard”

“Ah. Miki, you just say such a high spirited line”

Tatsuya and Mikihiko turned their eyes to the entrance of the adjustment centre vehicle, after hearing the sudden voice. Erika’s face was seen from the vehicle’s entrance, under the camper.

“Erika, what is it?”

“I thought you have finished your work since the release of psion wave has stopped. Do you want to have a tea? Everyone is waiting”

“You come here to call us”

“It’s nothing much. We’re next to this car after all” After hearing Erika’s words, Tatsuya turned his face to Mikihiko.

“Mikihiko, how about you? Since the necessary adjustment is done, don’t you need to go back to your room for some rest?”

“No, I’m going to sit with everyone. I should be able to sleep better after”

“Roger”

Erika retracted her face from the vehicle. Tatsuya and Mikihiko followed behind. The prefabricated tables were spread just beside the vehicle. Above them was the awning tent which was extended from the roof of the vehicle. It was a little camp-like landscape.

Both of their seats had been prepared. Tatsuya was seated between Mikihiko and Miyuki, while next to Mikihiko was Mizuki.

“Onii-sama, thank you very much for your hard work” Miyuki handed over Tatsuya’s cup of coffee,

“Umm, Yoshida-kun. Here you go” Mizuki poured green tea to Mikihiko’s cup.

“Ah, you even troubled yourself to prepared this separately.
Thank you, Shibata-san”

As Mikihiko said, the only one who was served a green tea was him.

“The one who prepared the tea specially was Pixie though”

“Yoshida-kun can only see Mizuki after all”

The 2 of them were out of the table. Since their number was greater than the table's capacity, they couldn't seat at one table. Their voice came from the adjacent table.

“Subaru! Eimi! Don't tease him!”

“Honoka. You're just envious of them right?”

“No, no way! I'm not envious at all!” (this is in somewhat mixed dialect with Kansai-ben)

“Eimi, calm down... I don't even know where she come from anymore”

“More like, where do you get that dialect?”

“Is it really a dialect?”

Hearing the chaotic conversation from the next table, Mikihiko was smiling while blushing.

“Mikihiko, you're able to relax properly after all. I thought you'd be more under the pressure”

Leo said so from across the table, Mikihiko shook his head with a laugh.

“I’m not relaxed at all. How should I put it, the fighting spirit come up naturally. Even if I don’t think about it, I have the ‘must win’ feeling”

“Hee... Miki, you seem to be in a very good condition”

Erika shot such a serious proclamation after hearing Mikihiko’s words.

“It’s a little rare to see you having such conviction. Even if it’s out of your character, if that’s the truth, seems like we don’t need to worry about tomorrow”

“Yes, I’ll surely win”

The pressure was catching up with him after he said so. However, if he recalled the day where he couldn’t even participate in the game, he was fairly pleased. (That’s right. I thought I will never be able to feel such a fulfilling feeling anymore. Were it not for that day... I really thought so for the longest time...) Now I’m sure, that was not an accident. That incident happened to prepare me for these encounters, I thought I need to go through the whole ordeal on my own, by now, I can see what it was all about.

The incident which happened 6 months before the entrance exam to the Magic High School, which made me not to be able to use magic as I had been. Although I was not rejected, I was deemed unsuitable to obtain the eight-petals-emblem, and settled as the weed. The opportunity came to me while I was there.

However, that was the will of heaven. Precisely because I was a 2nd Course student, I obtained my friends, and I was able to connect with him as a friend. It was a blessing in disguise. I had much more valuable encounters than that emblem. These all became available to from that day, I believe that firmly now. 17th August AD 2094. Lunar day 7 July, the night of Tanabata. Mikihiko was stiffened while reminiscing the feeling of that day.

17th of August in AD 2094. Lunar day 7 of July, the night of Tanabata, an yearly important ritual was performed at Yoshida-ke.

The name of the ritual is ‘Hoshi Oroshi no Gi’. It didn’t come from the orthodox religion, which the traditional religious people might call ‘evil cult’ and combining it with the Shinto teaching from Yoshida-ke ‘Koushin’, it was possible to operate a large-scale weather control in ‘country’ level via Divine Spirit, a large-scale independent information body (also called isolated information form) which was a ritual that arouse the feeling of skill competition. The one referred as the ‘country’ was the previous prefecture system with the ‘decree system country’.

This old technique was one that could display one’s excellency, and was selected as the base of choosing the family heir. However, the ritual had been deemed as bloody, and now Yoshida-ke decided to define their eldest son as the one who would inherit the family head title.

However, even after it had been separated from the means of selection of the next family head in modern era, the ceremony still carries an important meaning which determines the best magician of the clan. Also, if any of the brother or cousin could continually perform ‘Hoshi Oroshi no Gi’ better than the eldest son, the unwritten rule was that the eldest son would relinquish the inheritance to such person. In fact, now in the main family, namely Mikihiko’s father, who was the second son of 4 siblings.

For now, Yoshida-ke’s original next family head was Mikihiko’s older brother. Mikihiko is his only sibling, he has no sister.

However, he has 9 male cousins. The fact that they were only 2 children in the main family was considered exceptionally small, since the ancient magician’s pedigree generally lies on the number of siblings. Especially, the current family head’s brothers whose sons were participating fiercely in the ritual with hidden fighting spirit each year.

In the first place, at their age, until last year only Mikihiko showed such fluidity of magic development which likely to replace Motohiko’s position, Mikihiko is the only younger brother of Motohiko. Mikihiko who was referred as ‘the child prodigy of Yoshida-ke’ had surpassed his brother in the evocation magic of Jingi Magic (the so called Spirit Magic, the base of Yoshida-ke), rumoured had him closed in to be the next family head.

In fact, in last year’s performance, Mikihiko’s had shown a workmanship that second only to the current family head.

Mikihiko never desired to be the family head to replace his brother. He was a boy of modest personality, and was not suitable to be a leader. He, himself, aware of such fact, and thought that his brother should become the next family head. His desire, his ambition, was in different place.

The Divine Spirit ‘Dragon God’ who stand at the pinnacle of all nature spirits. He intended to complete this art with his own hands.

That was Mikihiko’s ambition. It was a long cherished wish of the founder of Yoshida-ke.

Yoshida-ke ancestry was told to be originated from a rain-shaman. He was not the famous Mr. Yoshida of Shinto, but just a humble shaman in the middle of a village. However, the one difference was that Yoshida-ke’s ancestors had a real power. A person who was sharper than he beasts, not only in reading the wind and clouds, but also had the power to call upon the clouds which brought the rain. However, it was a small power. The extent of his power was to gather the clouds which were usually scattered in the sky through the flow of wind, as long as it was a rain-clouds. When there was a long-term drought, the air was dry, there was nothing to do against it. The village where he lived was eventually destroyed by drought. The villagers forgot the one who helped them, so the ancestors casted out flow to scatter the clouds in resentment.

Since then, the descendant of shaman from Mt. Fuji continued to explore a way to counter the drought with a force that inherited in the blood. Damming the river, to create a pond.

Changing the flow of underground water, to make a well in the place where there was no natural well.

Controlling a larger-scale wind movement, to call out clouds from far away. In the midst of those trial and error, Yoshida-ke reached a conclusion.

After all, no matter what kind of magic they used, they were all useless without the water itself.

To overcome the drought, it is necessary to call water. So, where do the water brought from, in the best interest of all?

In the time of drought, where is the one place where you can always find water? If one think that much, the answer was not difficult.

From the sea.

They arrived on the conclusion of ‘the whole circulation of water’

In Japan, when you talk about the god of sea, it was the dragon. It was a concept of Buddhism, but had nothing to do with the Arica origin. The god of the sea, Suijin . The dragon who dominated Ryuuguu in the sea, who ascended to heaven by riding the clouds, and showering the wind and rain, ‘Ryuujin ’. That was the control of rainfall which Yoshida-ke pursued.

Yoshida-ke's ancestors were a group of dragon worshipers, hermits who were learning the way of Onmyoudou and Shugendou in order to thread on the path of the dragon, they were the guardian priest of the dragon deity. They devoted their religious virtues and wisdom to the dragon, continued to follow the path which led to God. Eventually, the original purpose to overcome the drought became secondary, ever since they found about the dragon, it had become their new purpose. As a result, the current Yoshida-ke came to be referred as a prestigious ancient magician.

The current doctrine of Yoshida-ke, placed the dragon at the top of the incarnation of serving spirits from natural phenomena. The arts of calling other spirit, which served the top Spirit God, were seen as a stepping stone to call the Divine Spirit which led to the dragon.

To devise 'an art which leads to God' with his own hands. Such was the hope of Mikihiko, hence the position of family head could be seen as an obstruction to his goal, which requires him to devote all his time in it, instead of clearing the operative management of the house and family estate.

Therefore, this 'Hoshi Oroshi no Gi' ceremony was the right place to evoke the rivalry with his brother, to check how much his brother was able to call upon the Divine Spirit. Motohiko was chosen as the 3rd position, right behind Mikihiko. This was the order of the result of last year's 'Hoshi Oroshi no Gi'.

Motohiko rose his magic.

Mikihiko stared intently to his performance.

Their relationship as siblings were not bad. Despite the huge age gap between them --- Motohiko was older by 7 years from Mikihiko ---- there was neither siblings quarrel nor were they get along well, Mikihiko honoured his older brother, and Motohiko protected his younger brother from jealousy attacks due to his superior talent.

During his childhood, Mikihiko was taught by Motohiko.

By the time Mikihiko's talent began to exceed Motohiko's capabilities, Mikihiko came to prefer to practice by himself. He unconsciously avoided to be compared with his brother's, in regards of their talents. He hated to hear that his talent surpasses that of his brother's.

However, he wouldn't let go of this ritual just like that.

He wanted to show that he, himself, was worthy of 'The Art which Leads to God'. Therefore, he watched his brother's performance carefully, as his biggest competitor.

His brother had reached the altar mirror. The mirror on the altar was adjusted to face the South direction, in order to reflect the North Star. (He's not using any charm?)

His brother seemed to reach out to the mirror, Mikihiko was strucked by a surprising feeling.

The thing which was in Motohiko's hand was Tamagushi , a branch from Sakaki tree, a sacred tree of Shinto.

Although Yoshida-ke magic had a combination of Shinto structurally, the fundamental arts were strongly influenced by Onmyoudou.

However, the ritual which Motohiko tried to carry out seemed to be originated from Shinto. Rather than a Shintoic ritual itself, he was attempting to stimulate the Divine Spirit with the help of the form.

(Yuushide , is it....?)

The Sakaki branch which was offered, tied with the yuushide, which now almost lost all its use, Mikihiko guessed that it was cotton intuitively. Moreover, this yuushide was not made by folding, it was made by binding them together.

(Making a charm out of cotton, is it possible to bind it with the string---?) Mikihiko seemed to think that it was an appropriate magic instrument which originated from the secret art of the other sect, rather than the one used by Yoshida-ke. The one who felt so was not only him, there were some admiration flowed from the family who watched the ceremony. They were also intrigued whether Mikihiko would use the same method as Motohiko.

While Motohiko dedicated his sacred Shinto tree branch, he did it to the North Star which was reflected in the mirror, rather than

dedicating it to the shrine ---- North Star, directly. North Star, is star which also images the god of Dragon.

It was neither a spell nor chant. Nor it was generated from one's breath. It was 'power' --- referred to as a spiritual power of one's heart, or a magic power of one's mind, it was referred as 'force' in Yoshida-ke ----- he had prepared the magic tool for this day.

(---- it's connected?)

Mikihiko certainly felt that his brother connected 'something'. Much bigger than human's consciousness.

Motohiko's face went pale due to excessive mental strain. In order to stimulate a huge Divine Spirit which he had never been in contact even once, to desperately keep the connection, and strengthened it. Wind blew.

Motohiko's tree branch, clothes, and hair were not shaking at all. It was the same as Mikihiko, their father, and everyone who was watching the altar.

Physically, there wasn't any wind blowing. However, everyone who was there felt the wind. Gradually increasing in force, soon a gusty wind came up, made it similar to a storm.

"Fuujin ?"

Under the torrents of auditory hallucination of wind noises, someone's voice could be heard.

"This 'wind' belongs to Fuujin, doesn't it?"

Following that voice, Mikihiko looked up to the night sky. Everyone to his right and left was also looking up to the sky.

After looking at the sky for some time, a vortex of huge wind was under its way to form.

“Does he just arise the Fuujin...?”

A string of murmur spread around the altar.

The atmosphere was still. Mikihiko was among those who looked up to the night sky, he felt such a pressure that made his body froze. Before long, the wind ceased.

Motofuru's back was rocked by a rough breathing, before he bowed toward the family assembly in exhausted appearance.

Applauses rose up. In their suppressed enthusiasm, several of family members praised Motohiko. It was beyond anyone's expectation, and. As expected of the heir, and.

The best magic performed this year will surely go to Motohiko, and. Mikihiko completely agreed to the first two. However, he rejected the last opinion.

(Certainly, his brother's magic performance was great. He even devised his own magic tools, he understood well and made thorough preparation for today)

Mikihiko thought so while watching his brother descent from the altar, supported by the young women disciples who helped the procession of the ceremony. His brother used up all his force to successfully called upon Fuujin.

He demonstrated his best in this important ritual. That alone, showed that his brother is worthy of respect, Mikihiko thought obediently. That was why, he ---- Mikihiko sharpened his calm mind before proceeding any further. When he determined that he had sufficient mental concentration, he rose from his seat.

The commotion had subsided. The eyes of the clan gathered to Mikihiko who was walking up to the altar for the ritual.

The rituals were done in the field. It was a special ritual field in secluded mountain, but the night wind blew occasionally mixed with the cries of insect and the rustling of leaves. Yet, at this time, the sound that reached the people's ear gathered for the ritual was Mikihiko's footstep in climbing the stairs to the altar.

Mikihiko prepared his breath. He took out a bundle of charms from his sleeve, and spread them in a fan shape. It was not a single charm, but 9 pieces of charms knitted together into one, it took him 3 months to write the charms.

“Wait, Mikihiko”

The one who called out to him was the head of the clan, Mikihiko's father, Sachihiko. To stop the magician before conducting a ritual. Even if he was the head of the clan, it was inevitably unusual error for him to do that. Mikihiko, without showing any sign of disturbance, turned his attention from his charms to his father.

“What is it, Chichi-ue ?”

However, it was visible that he was not completely calm, to answer his father while remaining at the stage. Given the original courtesy, he should not replied the family head by looking down on him from above.

“What are you trying to do today?”

However, it didn't bothered Sachihiko. He was visibly upset due to another reason.

After Mikihiko slightly hesitated, he answered resolutely to him.

“I'm planning to call the Ryuujin”

Another commotion spread. Half of the audience was in a surprise saying ‘no way’, and the rest of the congregation expected this and say ‘finally’.

“Stop it”

However, Sachihiko's answer was out of everyone's expectation.

“Why do you say so? What I'm going to summon should be left on my discretion”

The one who nodded to Mikihiko's rebuttal was not only one or two people. The decision was a solitary one. That loneliness and pride, were not to be interfered even by the parents. Sachihiko also understood this in his heart. However, he still stopped his son.

“Mikihiko, do you seriously intent to raise the Ryuujin even without having the ‘Crystal Eye’?”

Another commotion raised up at the words of the family head.

“That... I don’t need such a thing”

“Mikihiko, the amount of information possessed by the dragon cannot be compared to other Divine Spirit”

Mikihiko was visibly shown his reaction after Sachihiko attacked him with ‘the amount of information’ matter.

Yoshida-ke’s magic was not based on a particular religion.

They’ve been incorporating the necessary art indiscriminately.

They didn’t even hesitate to lay their hand on the Imikirawa and Jahou . (They incorporated the Jahou in their arts after they got rid of the original caster. Therefore, they weren’t living with the rejection of ‘evil cult group’ due to their magic)

However, even this sense of magic had been repelled with the development of modern magic in this century, and even within the clan, many people also think this way. It was a complex story, but the influences of modern magic certainly existed.

Sachihiko was one of the person who actively sought for modern magic’s knowledge, and received emotional backlash in the family. He preached to those who were opposed of his opinion.

‘Isn’t our clan’s magic originally work this way?’.

Nevertheless, there were antipathy left to modern magic. He was trying to restrain his son from using the modern magic theory which would bring discomfort to the clan.

“Dragon is an independent information body of large circulation of water. It consists of water control, wind control, and fire containment, moreover, it composed of information which spanned to a very wide area. That’s why we need the ‘Eyes’ in order to see the information of the Dragon from the ocean”

In other word, to make a contact with Dragon, more than one magician is necessary. One for control and alert, one to summon the core of the Divine Spirit, one for breach containment, the force and the thinnest parts, those were essential role which led the central part to the Divine Spirit, Yoshida-ke had concluded thus far.

“If you would take my opinion, Chichi-ue, those are all hypothesis” However, Mikihiko casted openly his opinion to the research of his predecessors.

“First of all, the Crystal Eyes who showed the way to the Dragon King itself are unidentified, it is only present in legend. Yoshida-ke has existed for more than 200 years, and there wasn’t a single member ever possess the Crystal Eye. I think this is the time for us to take a step further”

None of the disciples disagreed with Mikihiko’s words. Some of the family members also visibly smiling to support his argument. They were tired of waiting. The owner of Crystal Eyes who had never been found, regardless how much they searched.

“This world that has been able to use magic, which was thought to be a legend. We can’t just consider it as non-existent even if we

can't confirm it yet" Sachihiko's roundabout objection to Mikihiko had received much response from the people.

"That's because we concealed our knowledge..."

"However, magic is real. We ourselves are the evidences. To the people who doesn't know about magic, it might be a legend, but it is a widely known fact now. Mikihiko, why do you conclude that Crystal Eyes in the legend doesn't exist?"



Mikihiko did not have any answer to his father's question.

"Even if it does exist, it's still meaningless if we can't find it. If I can't find it during my life time, then it has nothing to do with me. The Crystal Eye is not around now, so I think it's not wrong for me in exploring other path" Instead, Mikihiko swap his story.

"Chichi-ue. What does this 'Hoshi Oroshi no Gi' exist for? What is the true meaning behind it to Yoshida-ke?" The pretext of this brandish, crushed his reasoning. Exactly because Sachihiko was the head of the family that he denied Mikihiko's argument.

".... Motohiko, say something to Mikihiko too" Sachihiko was not speaking as the family head, but as a father to his oldest son.

"Chichi-ue, I can't say anything to Mikihiko now" However, Motohiko couldn't respond to Sachihiko's request.

"Originally, I was intending to summon the Divine Spirit of the dragon myself. However, I wield no such power in me.

Therefore, I'm agree with him on this plight" He said so while smiling, even without being able to support his body properly.

"Moreover, this 'Hoshi Oroshi no Gi' is a time where a magician shows his skill to the family. As his brother, I can't disturb him"

"Ani-ue..." After unexpectedly receiving such cover, Mikihiko lost his words.

"However, Mikihiko, don't be reckless. Everyone here knows your skill, and we all know it's a difficult technique which 'leads

to God'. If you think you can't continue, cease your magic immediately”

“----I'll keep that in mind” Even Mikihiko knew that his brother didn't say that because he wanted to be the best performer of ‘Hoshi Oroshi no Gi’ of the year.

His brother was just worried about his body. After listening to those backlash, Mikihiko felt rather upset, it was unacceptable. Mikihiko understood that perfectly. However, in the same time, an awareness that he must be successful at all cost began to grow within him.

Mikihiko moved toward the mirror in the altar. There was no voice to stop him this time. He extended his charms again. He read the drawn characters and patterns on them, as a step to build the magic. In modern magic's term, psion wave was projected to the charms, to assemble the magic formula, where each part belongs to a sequence which received a return signal from magic calculation area.

Then, superimposing the assembled magic formula to project it onto the charms. By doing so, the charms became a controller for the summoned spirits, that is, the independent information bodies. The scale of independent information body did not extent to full control, but only to communicate the intention of the magician.

In other words, spirit is a psion information body which records the natural phenomena. It didn't carry any energy in physical

sense, since it has no manifestation as a phenomenon due to the lack of information for its action and direction.

This psion information body provides the direction and action of the identified spirit. SB magic's true form is to cause independent information bodies to modify events based on it, by accessing the psion information body, it draws magic from the input of the possible state of the psion information body.

To arouse spirits, first the magician must catch the interest of the spirit. However, there was no need to look for where the spirit is. 'Ryuujin' is an independent information body of the 'Large Circulation of Water'. There was no way one could lose sight of this huge information body.

The problem lies here onwards. To access information body, it was not as easy as making contact with the cloud. It must be matched with the wave form, such in tuning radio. However, the process is much more complex than radio. The wavelength and frequency regularly change. It might be similar to decrypting the analog curve in cryptography rather than tuning. The more complex the independent information body, the larger the change in the waveform, which must all be considered.

Once you able to decode the wave form, the next ordeal awaiting the magician is the pressure due to large amount of information. The amount of information in living natural phenomenon was much more than what human spirit could sustain, but the amount of information exposed to human's consciousness is

only a small part. Otherwise, human would have been crushed under the amount of information of the natural phenomena. Usually, it would result in losing of consciousness before it's broken apart. Although, it is not unnatural at all to get such result when a magician come into contact with large independent information body, it still is a failure in respect of magic.

Withstanding the pressure of combined waveform. On top of that, to dominate the opponent and at least get a partial control over it. Of course, the magician still need to provide it with active phenomena information.

With the owner of Crystal Eyes, the tuning of the waveform can be achieved easily. However, the process which gives pressure to the magician, in the end, must be taken by the caster himself. Mikihiko thought that he did not need such Crystal Eye since it was only a mean of tuning. If it were only to tackle such process, he could try to do all the processes on his own. Mikihiko hypothesized so while focusing into the charms which is turned into a controller. He captured the sign of the Ryuujin almost immediately. So far, it goes as expected. However, he couldn't get a fine tuning. Even when he was reading the frequencies and wavelength, it immediately changed. The pattern of changes was too complicated, and in the end, it only consumed the energy of the caster.

Even so, Mikihiko kept his concentration, as expected of one who bears the name of 'Child Prodigy', he was matching his psion

wave to Ryuujin bit by bit. The audience probably sensed what he was doing as they were watching him. Occasional clamours arose from the audience surrounding the altar. Eventually there was a clamour,

It's connected

It's connected

It's connected

The clamour changed. Such words came out of the high-level magician. (... I caught it!) The perfect tuning. Mikihiko got such response, suddenly.

Fulfil

Mountain echo-like, sea roar-like, such a distant voice arrived to Mikihiko. (Auditory hallucinations?) Clearly, it was not a voice he heard by his ears. Mikihiko disregarding the voice, he fed up more of his psion to the synchronized link to establish stronger connection with the dragon, hauling the psion wave of his target.

Fulfil..... That voice was heard nearer than the first time.

Fulfil.....

The stronger Mikihiko haul the psion wave of the dragon, the louder the voice became.

Fulfil.....

(Is this, the voice of the Ryuujin?) Impossible, Mikihiko thought so. The dragon he called out on his convenience ought to be an independent information body of 'large circulation of the water'. However, contrary to his thought, Immediately after Mikihiko thought so, A conspicuously large and bright dragon voice raided his consciousness.

Fulfil Me!

"Uwaaaaaa!"

Mikihiko screamed out his throat.

He was not aware of it.

His consciousness was burnt, it was hot rather than painful.

The magic source, where the magic calculation area referred to in modern magic was forced to operate in a high speed.

As soon as he recognized that, Mikihiko forgot about it.

He couldn't remember.

A whole lot of psion was taken away from him.

He thought, it was stolen.

He thought, it was eaten.

He couldn't withstand the pain of the loss, Mikihiko lost his consciousness-----.

[A certain day in January in 2095] Yoshida-ke, on the opposite of the dojo, there was a backyard, a single boy was seen to be

working with accustomed mobile terminal shape CAD. There was no pause in the movement of the boy who hit the large terminal with his 2 hands. Only after repeating the same action hundreds and thousands of times, the boy felt natural about wearing the technology in his hands. A torch was placed in front of the boy. His eyes had been staring --- glaring at the fireless torch. Approximately one second after the boy finished manipulating the CAD> The torch lighted up at once.

“Damn!” The boy spat a curse.

“Slow! Too slow! Why do I become a dunce like this!”

The High School entrance exam was getting closer, Mikihiko cursed himself in lamentation. Five months ago, the night of the ceremony. Mikihiko awoke after fainted, he was no longer able to use his magic well.

He can activate the magic sequence. The aim and power were also as expected. However, the speed was unthinkable.

It felt slow no matter how many times he repeated it. He kept feeling that he was supposed to be able to use magic much faster.

His father said ‘it’s your imagination’.

His brother also said ‘it’s your imagination’. Both of them said that he could use his magic at the same unchanging speed as before. His brother, Motohiko, comforted Mikihiko that he was just nervous at the failure of the ritual. However, Mikihiko couldn’t be convinced. He was impatient.

I should have completed the spell much faster.

I should have been able to use magic more freely.

He was impatient, and reckless, he couldn't obtain the expected result due to his impatience, Mikihiko was really not able to use his magic well during those time.

His father, Sachihiko, ordered Mikihiko to rest from his training. He said that Mikihiko would not let Mikihiko progress to become a reckless magician.

Mikihiko rested from the doujou training, and tried his chance at Magic Cram School. Since he was no longer able to use the magic as he was, he thought he would find an alternative if he learns modern magic science. Even though he was still unable to wield his magic freely, he didn't tell his distrusts of his father and brother.

However, the Magic Cram School did not give him the result he had expected. In the first place, the Magic Cram School did not teach advance magic. It only taught the single systematic magic to pass Magic High School entrance examination using CAD and the basic theory about imposition of lineage magic.

Mikihiko read all of the magic theory literature on his own. He practiced the single systematic magic that was taught, many times, using an older type of CAD.

Hundreds of times, thousands of times.

Even so, his power did not return to what it was.

Extinguish the fire torch via the spirit of water. He commanded the spirits to add in moisture, Mikihiko returned to his original position to repeat the practice. When he was about to manipulate his CAD, Mikihiko heard the voice of his brother.

“Mikihiko, it’s time for school” Mikihiko stubbornly glared at the torch, but before long, he released all the tension on his shoulder.

“Ani-ue, I’m sorry for making you to come all the way here” Mikihiko did not try to make unnecessary contact with his family. He didn’t throw a tantrum. He just polite, as for the others, he seemed to have make a wall against them.

“Mikihiko, don’t be reckless. Anyone can be in a slump” Motohiko was earnestly worried about his brother, only to be left hanging with a bow from Mikihiko.

“Even with forcing yourself, sometimes the outcome doesn’t go very well”

“I understand” On the appearance, Mikihiko seemed to have received his brother’s advice well. In fact, Motohiko was also been plagued with exhaustion after he rose the Divine Spirit ‘Fuujin’ beyond his limit, but Mikihiko did not seem to realize that. He thought that he was the only one who suffered.

“Don’t mind it. Sometimes we might have a roundabout path instead of the shortcut”

“Thank you for your advice” Mikihiko went to the main house after he bowed to his brother. After he showed up in the living

room, he said that he had no time to eat breakfast to his father and mother, Mikihiko briefly headed to school by himself.

[14th of August in 2096]

“Morning, Tatsuya”

“Morning, Mikihiko. Did you get a good sleep?”

“Haha.., I have enough sleep, and my physical condition is good”

“Certainly, you seem alright” As usual, he was behaving awkwardly whenever Tatsuya fixed his eyes on him, after all this time, at the same time, Mikihiko felt a certain of sense of trust.

(That reminds me, last year's 9SC was the trigger of my escape from my slump)

Last night, he remembered the days of anguish. The memory was not as painful, for some reason. It probably due to the fact that it had become the thing of his past for Mikihiko. Rather, he was ashamed as he recalled his distrust to his family from day by day.

“What is it, Mikihiko? Why do you suddenly laugh?”

“Eh? Am I laughing?”

“Are you laughing in reminiscent? What a weird guy”

“.... Tatsuya. Can you stop sounding so seriously that it is a really unpleasant feeling. I honestly feel dejected”

“Of course, it’s a joke” As the replied did not show a hint of joke, Mikihiko became seriously dejected. With the silly conversation that he had now, Mikihiko seemed to have remembered those valuable days.

Mikihiko was not allowed to participate in ‘Hoshi Oroshi no Gi’ last year. His father said ‘you should see the place where you should have belonged to’, and was forcibly sent to 9SC.

This year, ‘Hoshi Oroshi no Gi’ would be held after 9SC, on 24th August, but it was too close. Mikihiko was going to absent from participating this year as well. He was not ready to participate in the ritual. For now, the important thing was 9SC.

“Let’s stop the joke here, it’s time for final adjustment”

Urged by Tatsuya, Mikihiko consciousness returned to the reality from his own world. He moved forward to the adjusting device, put on the goggles for measurements, and placed his hands on the panel.

“You do seem to be in a good condition. But you are a little too excited”

“Eh, you can figure out that much!?” To Mikihiko’s amazement, Tatsuya laughed lightly.

“Emotions are the area of pushion after all. Mizuki should be able to see it, but it’s

impossible to measure from the machine. However, I can guess from the form of your psion wave. It still wouldn't escape the impact of emotion.

"Hee... that's new to me"

"Mikihiko, it's not the time for such admiration" Mikihiko showed his admiration to the stunning advanced technology earnestly, but he was cut short by Tatsuya.

"It won't be good for you to be so excited. It's important to keep your calm, you should now this better as an ancient magician, right?"

Hearing Tatsuya's words, Mikihiko threw a wry smile.

"Yeah. The ancient magic tends to be affected by psychological state than modern magic for sure"

Mikihiko trimmed his breathing. Come to think of it, he was able to normalize his breathing more than ever when he was at the last 9SC when deploying magic. He never thought he would be hearing such thing from Erika's mouth, it was quite a good memory.

"How about now?" Mikihiko put his hand on the measuring panel again.

"No problem. As expected, seems like you're able to adjust it properly this quick" The amazing one is you, though Mikihiko did not voice this out. He was afraid if it would sound like a lie were it came out of his mouth.

Mikihiko was able to get out of the slump because he participated in the Monolith Code in the same team with Tatsuya. To be precise, after he used the CAD adjusted by Tatsuya in Monolith Code.

Now, he knew the cause of his malfunction. It was, after all, as his brother said, that he was in a slump, instead of losing his magic power. At the night of the ceremony, that voice which he heard in the midst of evoking the magic.

Fulfil me!

That voice was indeed, the voice of the 'Ryuujin'. The huge independent information body that he accessed, it was requesting for more information processing speed, which was insufficient to maintain the connection, hence, causing a reverse flow of magic evocation. At that time, the processing capacity required from the 'Ryuujin' exceeded his capability, his magic calculation area had exceeded the normal operation made him unconscious. The depletion of psion he felt was the side effect of continual discharge of magic formula beyond his own intention.

The reason that convinced him that his magic speed had fallen was the sense of forced acceleration that time. Of course, it felt slow. Since he had felt that his magic speed went over, the normal operating speed of the magic calculation area felt slow to him, it was a given. It was the same as if you got off from the highway to a normal public road so to speak, it was the same

illusion as to have slower operation of self-propelled vehicle at normal speed limit.

Then, as he was trying in vain to change the behaviour of his magic calculation area which operating normally, his condition worsened, this was also a given. Wrong effort would ruin even achievements of the good effort of the past. What his father said that time was correct, that he needed a rest from the training.

Other student at First High probably didn't realize ---- the only one who realized must have been 'Miyuki-san' ----, the magic sequence that Tatsuya arrange in earnest, can bring out the magician's ability to his limit. He omitted any unnecessary parts, and tailored it to suit the magical characteristic of the user thoroughly, therefore, Magic calculation area also operates in those state. Unlike modern magician who builds the magic sequences unconsciously, relying on start-up type, Mikihiko noticed it as he was accustomed to build his own magic sequences as ancient magician, despite all of its inefficiency.

Mikihiko was also forced his magic calculation area unintentionally when he used Tatsuya-adjusted-CAD last year in Monolith Code. When he triggered the magic which sequences had been arranged by Tatsuya, it was faster than the construction of magic sequence which was forcibly drawn by the 'Ryuujin'. At the top of his abilities, Mikihiko had experienced the speed which was higher than that time, and finally was able to escape the illusion given from the

‘Ryuujin’.

“Mikihiko, can you try the result of the fine-tuning?”

“.... Have you finished? Somehow, you’re so fast” At Mikihiko’s words, the engineers in charge of Hattori and Carey smiled wryly. They didn’t even show a single hint of jealousy anymore.

Mikihiko fitted the CAD he received from Tatsuya to his left hand. In order to be fitted in one hand, the CAD had to be fitted in the thumb with a gouged-shape, it was light and thin instead of large. At the back, there was a belt who secured it to the hand, other than the thumb part, as not to drop it in vigorous movements. The 5 buttons were arranged in arc shape, with an enter button on the back of the index finger. It was a type which gives priority to preference of feeling than the number of magic sequences.

The start-up sequence expanded, he stopped the magic before its activation. Although he was never concerned, it felt unrivalled to Mikihiko. It surprised him even more, at this late hour.

“It’s alright. With this, I should be able to compete in my best form” The senior engineers were laughing; they didn’t understand the exact meaning of Mikihiko’s words. Mikihiko was trying to say that ‘I’m likely going to be inevitably do my best today’.

“Be careful with your pace. This can only be adjusted by the magician himself”

“I know. Fortunately, the second round for today is a resting period. The first game is quite a distance of break to the second game, there’s also lunch break between the afternoon games. There’s no worry about stamina”

“That’s right. We’re blessed to have such match order”

“Luck is also a part of ability” Hattori and Carey rode in to Mikihiko’s words. Monolith Code’s final, First High’s team seemed to relax in good condition.

The first game, First High vs Sixth High, was at the meadow stage.

Honestly, Mikihiko was not too pleased with the meadow stage. The defence of the monolith was left to Minakami Carey’s ‘Offset Magic’. At best, Mikihiko could only assist him in preventing the obvious attack of magic. The offense was assigned to Hattori, they managed to sink Six High’s defence with good combination of magic.

The second day, first game, ended in a gaping victory.

Out of the 3 rounds today, the second round would be facing Third High at last. Fortunately, due to the rule of Steeple Chase Cross Country’s rule this year, the dark horses couldn’t be spotted. Ichijou Masaki played in Ice Pillar Break and not Monolith Code.

Neither Ichijou Masaki nor Kichijouji Shinkurou were in Third High’s team. However, they were still the biggest opponent for First High.

The match was held in the Valley. There were elongated cliffs towering to the left and right, but the stage was characterized by large curve pond.

(Water....) The cause of his slump was the highest Divine Spirit of water. However, it was still Mikihiko's best forte.

"Yoshida, let's go with that, the one you're using last year at the freshmen game"

As soon as the stage was decided as the Valley, Carey suggested so with a mischievous smile. Last year's Monolith Code freshmen game, First High and Ninth High competed in a Valley stage, they won without any combat as Mikihiko completely covered the stage with Fog Barrier.

"Minakami-senpai, won't Third High be wary of that strategy?" Hattori didn't cast his opinion.

"I think it's a valid bet that they are warrying about it, but.... Shiba, what do you think?" Carey asked Tatsuya while considering Mikihiko's opinion. Tatsuya and Mikihiko put up a wry smile on their face. However, he was their senpai. Mikihiko gave up and left everything to

Tatsuya. Moreover, Mikihiko also wanted to hear Tatsuya's idea.

"Although, we might need to make some arrangements, it would be effective"

"What change?" Answering Hattori, Tatsuya began to explain his strategy.

Right from the start, a deep fog covered the entire valley.

The seat stands roared. Many of the audience who watched 9SC recalled last year's freshmen game.

Third High seemed to have expected this. They had erected a barrier within 15 meters radius of the center of the monolith, to prevent fog intrusion.

The monolith key-range of non-systematic magic was 10 meter. The objective barrier did not prevent First High's player to enter, as it was not set to deplete one's magic. However, the moment the barrier was erected, the Third High's player knew that they wouldn't be able to detect where the opponent come from. The 3 players from Third High surrounded the monolith and took a stance of race of endurance.

The reasoning of Third High was not wrong. Normally, this wide range magic to cover this much was not intended for a long use. This strategy was employed after they studied the match with Ninth High which took about less than 5 minutes.

However, even after 5 minutes, the fog was getting thicker.

Third High players didn't know the details of the nature of SB magic --- Spirit Magic. Spirit magic is performing event modification through an independent information body, the magician can enhance the collected process as much as the number of independent information bodies overtime.

Once they entered a battle of endurance, it was already First High's victory. Tatsuya didn't really read and pinpoint Third

High's strategy. He was making this strategy by considering many factors. He made hypothesis of the counteraction prepared by Third High for the Fog Barrier. He planned the next step by predicting their response.

Tatsuya did nothing special, nor extraordinary, in fact, it was a pretty obvious strategy. He predicted the opponent's action, and made countermeasures. His prediction was just right on the spot, so the measures were valids.

This made his strategy hit on the spot. The players from Third High were alternately erecting the objective barriers, but the exhaustion began to sip in. Moreover, from First High's team, Mikihiko was not the only one working. Hattori was also closing in steadily to prepare for offense.

Hattori was ensured of visibility by Mikihiko, the controller of the fog, he had reached about 30 meters away from Third High's position. Then, he aimed the area surrounding Third High's barrier with dry ice, without touching the barrier itself. Dry ices, which fell to the ground disappeared to wet the stone and moisten sparsely growing grass. The sound of dry ices fell to the ground was covered by Carey as a thunder-like sounds. The distant thunder which reverberated in this valley had also helped in avoiding the Third High's players suspicion.

Carey caused the cliff stones to gravel, or roaring sound from the crushed rock. The audiences cheered in delight to Carey's

performance, while inviting some suspicion to Third High's players.

Then, after 15 minutes have elapsed, Third High's team got impatient and finally moved. They expanded the objective barriers twice as big, and the offensive player went out of the barrier. Immediately, he was bound by blitz of net laid on the ground. The combination magic which Hattori good at, 'Slithering Thunder'. It was not effective in full length as the opponent's clothes were not wet enough, but he was prepared and acted correspondingly. Higher power to cover up the inefficiency.

The lightning flashes just outside the barrier, the other players within the barrier got upset. They did not even notice that the opponent had closed in immediate vicinity, and it took their calm.

Their barrier fluctuated. At that instant, a gust of wind engulfed the stone and slammed it. It was a variation of Hattori's magic, Linear Sandstorm. Even though, it should be called linear-stone-storm, as long as his objective to take down Third High's barrier.

The stones broke the barrier, it was wet and moisten, with drops of fog dissolved with carbon dioxide. Slithering Thunder found its new path, to trample around Third High's monolith. It flowed at once, with the fog and carbon dioxide.

In front of Hattori, who squatted to apply insulation on himself, beautiful but cruel illumination of lightning wrapped around Third High's player.

With the victory against Third High, Hattori, Carey, and Mikihiko lined up in front of First High's supporter seat.

The team waved their hands in front.

Mikihiko found Mizuki's figure, clapping in delight, in the midst of the supporter seat.

The girl who possessed Crystal Eye, whom Yoshida-ke had not found in more than 200 years.

Had she been there 2 years ago, the ritual might be successful.

Had she been there, he would have completed 'The art that leads to God'.

Mikihiko shook his head lightly, driving away the worldly thoughts from his consciousness.



He didn't consider that now. He had yet to finish the monolith code in 9SC.

After all, those things were not left to him to decide. He needed to explain about 'Crystal Eye' and 'The Art that leads to God', and asked for her cooperation. It was a matter of the future.

He still didn't know what would happen in the future between him and Mizuki. He was not even certain that they would still be having this relationship as a good friend.

More importantly, it's better to live up to her expectation. Mikihiko thought so.

For the sake of Tatsuya who helped him regained the power that he thought was lost, (though he didn't want to admit) for Erika who worried about him, and for his friends who had cheered for him, now let's give our best shot for victory.

Mikihiko's swore in his heart.

End

- Ganbarimasu: I'll work hard
- Suijin: God of Water, often depicted as a dragon
- Ryuuguu: Palace of Dragon King
- Ryuujin: Dragon God
- More about Tamagushi:
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamagushi>
- Yuushide: A cotton tie which is intended to be fastened and hang in a drooping curve in Shinto practice, in accordance to the God

- Fuujin: God of Wind
- Chichi-ue: Father, something like ‘otou-sama’ but mostly used by male.
- Imikirawa: abhorred or despised arts
- Jahou: Incorrect teaching of religion